

## Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Intentions: The Moderating Role of Passion

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**Abstract:** This study was based on a literature review to examine the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intentions as well as the moderating role of passion. The first part featured the introduction to the study which was followed by successive sections for theoretical framework as well as conceptual framework and linkages. Finally, a conceptual model was proposed based on an adaptation of the theory of planned behaviour and the study concluded with a section for conclusion and implication for further research.

**Key words:** Literature, relationship, introduction, framework, linkages, model

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### INTRODUCTION

The benefits of Entrepreneurship to any nation cannot be overemphasized. Particularly, because of the advantages it holds for Job creation and Economic well being (Murphy *et al.*, 1996). The level of unemployment in Nigeria has persistently been on the increase persistent increase in unemployment level in Nigeria. The unemployment level has increased steadily from 21.10% in 2010 to 23.90% as at 2014 (Garba 2010). The Government of Nigeria at different dispensations and at various levels have come up with various intervention programmes such as National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and more recently, Youth With Innovation (YOU WIN) as well as Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) of the youths. These programmes are primarily geared towards entrepreneurial development of the youths. More relevant to this study is the introduction of entrepreneurship education by the federal government through the Nigerian University Commission (NUC) targeted at inculcating entrepreneurial skills in undergraduates towards increased considerations of a career in entrepreneurship by graduates of institutions of higher learning.

Studies have shown the notable impact and the important role of entrepreneurship education with regards to the creation of successful entrepreneurs particularly in Africa (Izedonmi and Okafor, 2010; Njoroge and Gathungu, 2013). Therefore, an educational system and

orientation geared towards the development of enterprise/entrepreneurial skills and mindset is considered salient to an individual's intention to become an entrepreneur. Hence, participation in a creative, well designed and practical oriented entrepreneurship education program can influence or increase the intention of undergraduates towards engaging in entrepreneurial activities especially after graduation. Motivation scholars consider intentions as good predictors of behaviour (Ndubisi and Richardson, 2002; Ndubisi and Igau, 2003) hence, a good understanding of the antecedents of entrepreneurial intentions is still regarded as a solid foundation for explaining entrepreneurial behaviour (Armitage and Corner, 2001; Smith *et al.*, 2007).

Research has indicated that actively engaging students in a challenging and experiential learning process facilitates the development of entrepreneurial competence and aptitude (Essia, 2012). Research has indicated that an entrepreneurial mind set can be developed through challenging and experiential approaches as against the traditional and monotonous methods of entrepreneurship education. This owes largely to the fact that acceptance and disposition of students towards the programme is enhanced in favour of an experiential and challenging approach to teaching and learning of entrepreneurship (Dragoni *et al.*, 2009; Clercq *et al.*, 2012). Consequently students are able to acquire relevant entrepreneurial skills and capabilities.

Investigation of passion in the formation of entrepreneurial intention is very much under explored. However, passion has an overwhelming practical relevance because it can enlighten entrepreneurship educators on the effects of the variations in the intensity with which individuals engage in entrepreneurial related activities which may be relevant to the formation of entrepreneurial intentions. Entrepreneurial passion is very dynamic consequent upon external conditions such as perceptions of the culture of the organization or institution in which an individual operates (Luthans, 2002; Burke and Fiksenbaum, 2009). An individual may express a high intensity of passion if allowed to experiment with novel ideas without interference yet it is possible that the same individual may express less passion about engaging in entrepreneurial related tasks if the operating environment is characterized by monotonous procedures and regulations (Clercq *et al.*, 2012).

Thus, this study advocates that an effective approach to entrepreneurship education and a favourable learning orientation can affect the formation of entrepreneurial intentions. This study also posits that entrepreneurial passion stimulated by an effective approach to entrepreneurship education and a favourable learning orientation can enhance or increase the formation of entrepreneurial intentions. Thus, the goal of this study will be to provide a conceptual framework explaining the possible linkages between entrepreneurship education, learning orientation and entrepreneurial passion as well as how entrepreneurial passion moderates the relationship between the aforementioned.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Framework

**Entrepreneurship education theory; human capital entrepreneurship theory:** The theoretical underpinning of human capital entrepreneurship theory as postulated by Becker (1975), derives its premise primarily on two factors which are education and experience. The theory postulates that knowledge acquired from education and experience is considered a resource that is diversely dispensed across individuals which informs the basis for understanding the disparities in recognition/identification and exploitation of opportunities (Chandler and Hanks, 1998; Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). Thus, the human capital theory of entrepreneurship creates a foundation for the place of education regarding entrepreneurial development and increase in entrepreneurial activities.

**Theory of planned behaviour:** The theory of planned behaviour was derived from the theory of reasoned

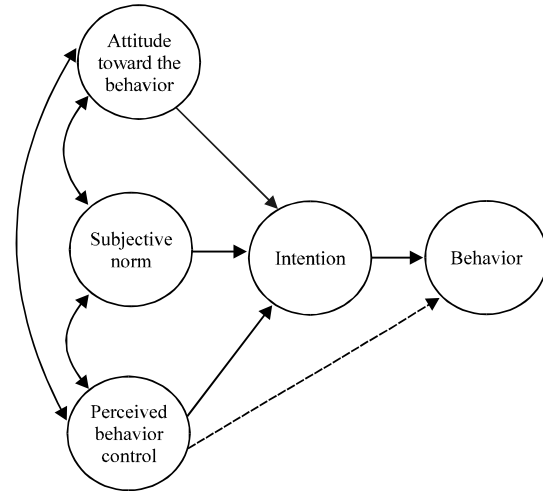


Fig. 1: Theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991)

action postulated by Fishbein and Azjen (1975) and Ajzen and Fishbein (1980). PBC was employed to predict human behaviours that are not completely under voluntary control. TRA was able to predict behaviour based on intentions with the assumption that all behaviours are voluntary and under control. However, not all intentions translate into actual behaviour which informed the premise for the introduction of perceived behavioural control (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2000). PBC argues that control beliefs give rise to perceived ease or difficulty in the performance of behaviour. The theory suggests that individuals are expected to transform their intentions into actions or behaviour based on an adequate level or degree of actual control over behaviour. Therefore, it is important to note that TPB argues that intention is a direct determinant or antecedent of behaviour performance while PBC, Attitude and subjective norm are regarded as the antecedents of intention (Ajzen, 1991). In principle the Theory of Planned Behaviour suggests that the more favourable the attitude and subjective norm and the greater the perceived behavioural control, the stronger an individual's intention towards the performance of entrepreneurial behaviour (Fig. 1).

**Adaptation of the theory of planned behaviour:** This study will adopt the distinction between self efficacy and PBC as argued by Tolma *et al.* (2006). Furthermore, Karali in 2013 argues that the combination of perceived self efficacy and perceived controllability appears to improve the predictions of intentions. Thus, in line with Karali in 2013 both self efficacy and PBC will be featured in this research as a modification of TPB. Hence in the context of this study, an individual's perceived confidence in the

ability to engage in successful entrepreneurial behaviour will be distinguished from the perceived ease or difficulty involved in engaging in entrepreneurial behaviour.

It is worthy of note that the findings of many studies suggest that subjective norm is not a stand alone impact variable of entrepreneurial intention (Krueger *et al.*, 2000; Autio *et al.*, 2001; Linan, 2004; Linan and Chen, 2009). There is an indication that many factors determine the extent to which subjective norm predicts entrepreneurial intention (Armitage and Corner, 2001). Hence, there is hardly any established theoretical explanation on how accurately and precisely subjective norm impacts on entrepreneurial intention. Thus, in the context of this research the adaptation of the theory of planned behaviour will not include subjective norm as an antecedent of intention.

**Experiential learning theory:** One of the prominent adult learning theories that have been employed in management learning for over three decades is the experiential learning theory. The theoretical underpinning of ELT suggests that learning takes place between individuals and the environment. According to Kolb (1984), learning involves the process of knowledge creation through transformation of experience. Scholars and researchers of adult education argue that adults learn effectively when new information is presented in real-life situations. Using a problem-solving approach in classroom activities rather than the traditional content-knowledge practices represents an example of a real-life situation approach to learning (Knowles *et al.*, 2014). Hence, ELT views learning as a social process of adaptation which employs a dynamic and holistic perception of learning. ELT is classified as a constructivist learning theory particularly because individuals transform their experiences into new knowledge using cognitive and social properties.

**Theory of entrepreneurial passion:** The theory of entrepreneurial passion was postulated by Cardon *et al.* (2009). The theory suggests that once entrepreneurial passion is stimulated as consequence of engagement in entrepreneurial related activities salient to an individual's identity, it culminates into an elaborate poignant experience which involves an engagement of the brain and body which can be expressed in appraisals and cognitions as well as physiological and behavioural responses respectively (Russell, 2003). The perception of emotional or poignant experience recognizes that the brain and body responses stimulated by passion do not feature as independent and disconnected responses but rather as

an articulate and synchronized pattern that is sustained over time (Damasio, 2001). Thus the experience of passion aids an entrepreneur's efforts in adapting and coping with environmental challenges.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Conceptual framework**

**History and development of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian Universities:** Consequent upon the persistent trends of youth unemployment in Nigeria, the federal government of Nigeria in 2006 enacted a policy of entrepreneurship education as a compulsory field of study on every level of education in Nigeria and particularly at the tertiary level of education with effect from the 2007/2008 academic session. The aim for the inclusion of entrepreneurship curricula in Universities as contended by Cotton, *et al.* in 2000 is that it will enhance graduates to gain access to a smart understanding of entrepreneurship as a concept, prepare them for the world of work as well as equip them with the technical know-how to act entrepreneurially as well as manage new ventures. In the same vein European Commission in 2002, argue that the main objectives of entrepreneurship education should be raising students' awareness of self employment as a career option, promotion of the development of personal skills and qualities such as creativity, risk taking, responsibility and other relevant skills consistent with to business start-ups and also provision of the necessary technical and business skills for new venture creation. Thus, exposure of university students to entrepreneurship education is considered a vital motivation to steer up entrepreneurial drive in learners. Hence, if entrepreneurship education is effectively organized it can be a trigger factor for increased entrepreneurial activities in Nigeria and consequently, a significant reduction in unemployment.

However, entrepreneurship education is still at infancy and a developing stage in Nigeria. Although, most universities in Nigeria have commenced the implementation of the compulsory EED module little rigorous research have been conducted to assess and also establish the relationship between students' participation in entrepreneurship education and their intentions to become entrepreneurs. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to understand how or whether participation in entrepreneurship education motivates intentions to become entrepreneurs or whether it enhances students' perception of their suitability for a career in entrepreneurship.

### **Definition of concepts**

**Entrepreneurship:** Entrepreneurship as a concept emerged as far back as 1732. The term was used by an Irish economist called Richard Cantillon to refer to individuals that possess a willingness to carry out various forms of activities associated with financial risks and new venture creation. The concept of entrepreneurship is dynamic thus there is no universal definition or theory considered as generally acceptable. Various researchers have attempted to define entrepreneurship from different views and standpoints. However the various conceptualizations are usually a reflection of the researcher's field or area of specialization.

One of the most renowned scholars in the field of management and entrepreneurship Peter Drucker, defined entrepreneurship as an innovative act which involves employing available resources geared at generation of novel or creative capacity for wealth creation (Okpara, 2007). However, other scholars and researchers have argued that while this definition may seem acceptable and appropriate, the complexities and dynamism of entrepreneurship as a concept suggests that it's a field with no clearly defined boundaries and may yet lack clarity in theoretical foundation (Bruyat and Julien, 2001; Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). Gartner *et al.* (2004) also presented his definition of entrepreneurship as the creation of new organization. However, it is important to note that entrepreneurship involves innovative activities which do not only include the creation of new businesses or organizations but it also involves the development of new visions and business methods for established businesses.

A school of thought believes that entrepreneurs are born and not made. This suggests that entrepreneurs are individuals with peculiar genes who emerge as a consequence of genetic inheritance. However, this myth has been demystified particularly because various studies have established the premise that every individual has the potential to become an entrepreneur especially through the process of education (Barringer and Ireland, 2010; Gelard and Saleh, 2011).

It is important to state that entrepreneurship as a career offer individuals the opportunity to be financially independent as well as enhance the achievement of professional and personal goals. However, the process of entrepreneurship can be very challenging in that it is characterized by a long term systematic process which involves identification of opportunities, development of business model, putting together a venture team, fund raising, financial management as well as leading and

motivating employees. Thus, the acquisition relevant knowledge, skill and expertise as regards the process of entrepreneurship are considered necessary for successful business start ups.

**Entrepreneurship education:** Entrepreneurship education describes the scope of lectures, curricular or Programmes that attempt to provide students with the necessary entrepreneurial competencies, knowledge and skills geared at the pursuit of an entrepreneurial career (Ekpoh and Edet, 2011; Keat *et al.*, 2011). It also refers to the conscious effort of an educator targeted at inculcating entrepreneurial skills in learners. Fayolle, Kryo and Ulijn in 2006, in their presentation defined entrepreneurship education as any pedagogical programme associated with inculcating entrepreneurial attitudes and skills as well as personal qualities and skills in learners. This suggests that the goal of entrepreneurship education is not exclusively hinged on the immediate creation of new businesses but also the acquisition of necessary skills geared towards prospective and favourable considerations of a career in entrepreneurship.

**Content of entrepreneurship programmes:** Generally, many researchers suggest that an effective entrepreneurship education programme requires learners to have significant hands-on experience especially with community ventures in order to learn value creation in real life ventures in preparation for their own future endeavors (McMullan and Long, 1987; Solomon, 2007). Thus, it is advocated that the content of these programmes should reflect these support activities which are considered as important elements of an effective entrepreneurship education programme (McMullan and Gillin, 1998).

**Pedagogy:** Sexton and Upton (1987) supported by Ronstadt (1990) also argue that entrepreneurship education programmes should feature more of individual over group activities. He further argued that the design of these activities should not be monotonous; they should be unstructured and give learners the opportunity to proffer creative solutions to challenges in situations of risk and conditions of instability. In a similar study by Solomon (2007), the findings suggests that entrepreneurship educators employ teaching methods such as invitation of guest speakers and class discussions as against the traditional teaching method of class lectures. However, the study also indicated that the traditional teaching approach of business plan writing is still a popular traditional method employed by entrepreneurship educators.

In summary as a basis for the continuous and extensive research in entrepreneurship education, Plaschka and Welsch (1990) stressed that entrepreneurship programmes are typically developing based on experimentations depending primarily on trends in entrepreneurship and feedbacks from students experiencing difficulties in their participation in the courses as well as the gaps confronted. Thus there is need for more research and studies on the contents and pedagogy of entrepreneurship programmes consistent with the ultimate goal of inculcating entrepreneurial skills and aptitudes in students or learners.

**Entrepreneurial intention:** Entrepreneurial intention is defined as the willingness of an individual to express entrepreneurial behaviour or engage in entrepreneurial activities associated with self employment initiatives or new business start ups. Entrepreneurial intentions are a reflection of inner courage, ambition and a sense of independence (Zain *et al.*, 2010). An individual's potential to become an entrepreneur may not find expression except they have intentions to become entrepreneurs. Bird (1988) presented a definition of entrepreneurial intentions as individuals' states of mind targeted at new venture creation, development of new business models or value addition within existing business enterprises. He further argued that intentions represent an important factor in the processes associated with new venture creation as well as business growth and survival. In the context of this study, three factors will be discussed direct antecedents of entrepreneurial intention. These are attitudes towards behaviour, Perceived behavioural control and self efficacy.

**Attitude towards behaviour:** Ajzen (2002) define attitude as a favourable or positive sensitivity or sensation towards diverse stimuli objects. This suggests that if individuals retain a positive belief about an object they logically acquire a favourable attitude towards the object. Individuals' beliefs are associated with certain features of an object hence an individual's attitude towards the object suggests the individual's assessment or evaluation of the object's features. Thus in principle, attitudes are a function of the summation of an individual's salient beliefs and the corresponding assessments associated with the beliefs.

**Perceived behavioural control:** Ajzen (1991) describes perceived behavioural control as an individual's perceived ease or difficulty to perform a particular

behaviour. The belief is that perceived behavioural control reflects past experiences of individuals and the anticipated challenges. He stressed that perceived behavioural control and intention precisely depicts an individual's control over the actual behaviour. Akmaliah (2009) argue that students who are exposed to entrepreneurial experience have a high rating on perceived behavioural control. This suggest that the greater a student's exposure to entrepreneurial experience, the greater their perceived behavioural control. Conclusively, as argued by Ruhle, etc. in 2010 self assessment of perceived behavioural control significantly impacts on students' intentions based on the fact that there is a supportive level of perceived feasibility that can motivate entrepreneurial intentions.

**Self efficacy:** Self efficacy as argued by Bandura (1982) reflects an individual's judgment on the extent of success that will be achieved in carrying out a specific task or dealing particular situations. In similar research by Basu and Virick (2008), previous business experience is considered as having a significant impact on high levels of self efficacy and positive attitude towards considerations of a career in entrepreneurship. They argued that individuals with previous experience express higher self efficacy and confidence in their abilities to repeat behaviour as compared to those with no previous related experience. Furthermore, they contended that students with previous experience in entrepreneurship will express more confidence in their abilities which enhances or increases their entrepreneurial intention.

**Entrepreneurial passion:** More importantly, research in entrepreneurship has recently focused on entrepreneurial passion. Cardon *et al.* (2009) argue that entrepreneurial passion involves the personal joy an individual derives from engaging in particular activities associated with the role of an entrepreneur. In their presentation, Cardon *et al.* (2009), loosely categorized the role of an entrepreneur into three identities namely; inventing new products/services developing a business venture and marketing products and services. Thus, the investigation of entrepreneurial passion in the formation of entrepreneurial intention is of great practical significance particularly because it provides theoretical understanding for entrepreneurship educators as regards the variations in the intensity or passion with which individuals engage in entrepreneurial related activities which may be considered as salient and relevant for leveraging entrepreneurial career motivations.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Conceptual linkages

#### Entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intention:

Therefore, adequate and effective entrepreneurship education can stimulate and increase students' interest towards career considerations in entrepreneurship (Gelard and Saleh, 2011). This is consequent upon the fact that entrepreneurship education can effectively equip learners with the required skills and knowledge consistent with effectively tackling challenging situations and complexities in decision making associated with a career in entrepreneurship (Izquierdo and Buelens, 2011). Thus, the perceptions of the impediments and risks associated with entrepreneurship is downplayed which motivates venture creation and well established business start-ups (Ahmad *et al.*, 2010). Extant studies have established a premise for the relationship between entrepreneurship education, attitude towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intention. The studies by Dell in 2008 and Tam in 2009 showed that there is a significant relationship between entrepreneurship education and changes in entrepreneurial attitude. They argued that participation in entrepreneurship education positively impacts student's attitude towards entrepreneurship owing to the fact that students are more equipped with the technical know-how and real-life skills necessary for a successful outcome in their pursuit of an entrepreneurial career. This in turn increases their entrepreneurial intentions considerably. Furthermore, various researchers have argued that entrepreneurial self-efficacy mediates the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention particularly because exposure to entrepreneurship education may facilitate the development of self confidence in students as well as confidence in their abilities to become entrepreneurs and effectively and successfully manage their own ventures thereby increasing their entrepreneurial intentions (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003; Izquierdo and Buelens, 2011; Drost, 2010).

In the same vein, research has shown that students who express interests in participating in entrepreneurship programmes as a taught course especially in the universities are likely to exhibit a higher level of perceived behavioural control (Akmaliah, 2009). Which indicates that exposure to entrepreneurship education positively influences perceived behavioural control (Basu and Virick, 2008). Various studies have also showed that perceived behavioural control positively influences entrepreneurial intentions hence, the theoretical underpinning indicates

that the higher the perceived behavioural control of an individual the higher the entrepreneurial intentions and vice-versa (Kolvereid, 1997; Chen *et al.*, 1998; Kristiansen and Indarti, 2004; Basu and Virick, 2008; Akmaliah, 2009; Paco *et al.*, 2011).

**Moderating role of entrepreneurial passion:** More specifically individuals with a strong entrepreneurial passion are internally motivated to effort fully take advantage of their current knowledge set which results in the experience of positive feelings of anticipated success or achievement (Baum and Locke, 2004). Thus, the higher an individual's entrepreneurial passion the greater the propensity that an individual's perceived self efficacy as regards becoming a successful entrepreneur will amplify enhance or increase their entrepreneurial intentions. In the same vein, an individual's entrepreneurial passion may also strengthen the relationship between the attitude towards becoming an entrepreneur and entrepreneurial intentions. When Individuals express passion towards entrepreneurial related activities, they demonstrate stronger degree of commitment towards achieving desirable entrepreneurial-related goals (Baum and Locke, 2004).

Cardon *et al.* (2009) argue that the difficulties associated with smallness and newness are major at the venture formation phase. According Cardon *et al.* (2009), entrepreneurs experience significant challenges including negative response to ideas, denial of funding needs and lack of legality which collectively may turn away prospective clients as well as recruits. Gimeno *et al.* (1997) also contended that to secure financial support, find clients, engage employees and more by and large institute the firm's standing and legality, an entrepreneur's doggedness in the quest for financial, human and social capital is vital (Gimeno *et al.*, 1997). Hence as postulated by Cardon *et al.* (2009), the regulatory control of extreme positive feelings linked with the founder identity is expected to activate action and the required energy and vigor of entrepreneurs to master demanding situations by overcoming uncertainties, setbacks and resource shortages in putting together financial, human and social capital. Bierly *et al.* (2000) also affirm that passion is associated with active and unrelenting goal pursuit, principally the capability to surmount resistance, obtain resources, manage activity, inspire as well as motivate key individuals and such anticipated difficulties. Thus, the intensity of passion may impact on the perceived behavioural control which is associated with the difficulty or otherwise anticipated with venture creation.

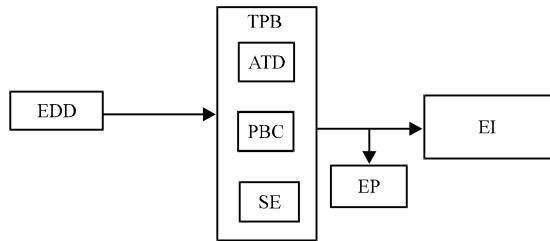


Fig. 2: An adaptation of the theory of planned behaviour. (Ajzen, 1991); EDD = Entrepreneurship Education; TPB = Theory of Planned Behaviour; ATD = Attitude Towards behaviour; PBC = Perceived Behavioural Control; SE = Self Efficacy; EP = Entrepreneurial Passion; E.I = Entrepreneurial Intention

**Conceptual model:** Based on an adaptation of the Theory of Planned behaviour, a conceptual model for this study is presented below to illustrate the influence of entrepreneurship education and learning orientation on entrepreneurial intention as well as the moderating role of entrepreneurial passion (Fig. 2).

## CONCLUSION

This study has conceptually explored the influence of learning orientation and entrepreneurship education on the entrepreneurial intentions of university students in Nigeria as well as the moderating role of entrepreneurial passion. Thus, this study advocates that an effective practical oriented approach to entrepreneurship education can affect the formation of entrepreneurial intentions. This study also posits that entrepreneurial passion stimulated by an effective approach to entrepreneurship education and a favourable learning orientation can enhance or increase the formation of entrepreneurial intentions. However, an area of further research will be to empirically validate the conceptual linkages presented above geared towards extending literature on the role entrepreneurial passion in entrepreneurship education research and also to contribute to the ongoing debate on content and pedagogical issues in entrepreneurship education literature. An empirical study may also validate the basis for the adaptation of the theory of planned behaviour as presented in the conceptual model for this study. This may also contribute to extant literature on the application of the theory of planned behaviour in entrepreneurship education research.

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